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TAGS: [KWMN](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [PHUM](#) [UG](#)

SUBJECT: UGANDANS ATTEND ALL-NIGHT ELECTION EVENT - AND MANY OTHERS

¶1. Summary: Mission Kampala's all-night Election Event on November 4th and 5th marked a high point in a robust series of election-themed programs. Guests from government, politics, civil society, academia, the media, business and the diplomatic community gathered in a festive atmosphere at The Sheraton to watch election returns and the much-anticipated announcement of the new U.S. President. In the lead-up to Election Day, post sponsored over twenty programs designed to engage Ugandans in discussion about democracy and the electoral process. Post plans to continue such programs in the future. End Summary.

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POST HOSTS ALL-NIGHT ELECTION PARTY  
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¶2. The U.S. Mission in Kampala hosted an all-night event in the Sheraton Rwenzori Ballroom to watch the U.S. presidential election returns. Beginning at 8:00 p.m. on November 4, contacts from the government, political parties, civil society, academia, the media, other diplomatic missions and the business community gathered to await the election outcome. Guests received packets of election-related materials produced by the Embassy's Information Resource Center (IRC), as well as election-themed pins, scratch pads and stickers.

¶3. In a ballroom decorated festively with red, white and blue balloons and garlands, as well as a democracy poster show, guests watched television coverage of the election on two large screens and chatted with Mission employees about the American electoral process. A third screen showed internet coverage, while a laptop in the lobby featured web chats hosted by the Office of International Information Programs (IIP). Mission volunteers passed out unofficial ballots to Ugandan guests, who enjoyed the opportunity to "vote" in this historic election.

¶4. While the crowd thinned by midnight, 20 to 30 die-hard guests stayed up all night to monitor election returns, which started coming in just after 2:00 a.m. local time. Watchers, including journalists and several Fulbright Scholars, stayed awake with the help of coffee and homemade cookies contributed by members of the Mission community. Some got a feel for how the Electoral College system works by keeping track of returns on the scratch pads provided.

¶5. By 6:00 a.m. on November 5, guests began arriving again, some returning from the previous evening. With results rolling in regularly, they focused their attention on CNN. The room watched with rapt attention as the outcome became clear and presidential hopeful John McCain delivered his concession speech. Barack Obama's acceptance speech drew applause and cheering at key points, and guests commented on the significance of the event they were witnessing. Post concluded its election event shortly after President-elect Obama closed his remarks.

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PRE-ELECTION OUTREACH APLENTY  
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¶6. In the lead-up to the presidential election, the Public Affairs Section (PAS) facilitated over 20 programs to explain and discuss America's electoral system, the candidates and democracy in general. Programs fell into three broad categories: (1) Programs using PD, Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) and/or IIP resources directly; (2) Collaborative efforts between PAS and other organizations; (3) Programs using Mission staff as speakers. Across

the board, audiences appreciated the opportunity to learn about American politics and discuss democratic practices.

¶7. PAS built several election-themed programs around PD offerings. In September, the IRC hosted university student leaders for an IIP web chat on the Electoral College. PAS took advantage of two Direct Video Conferences (DVC) offered by the Africa Regional Services (ARS) in Paris. One DVC focused on U.S. Nominating Conventions, while the other dealt with the 2008 U.S. General Election. Politicians, Members of Parliament (MPs) and journalists who attended the events participated actively, posing thoughtful questions and discussing the content afterwards. Two well-attended student programs featured Fulbright Scholars; one lectured on the role of special interest groups in campaign finance reform, while the other addressed factors influencing American voters' decisions.

¶8. A highlight of our pre-election programming came in the form of U.S. Speaker Steve Wymer. A dynamic and knowledgeable presenter, Mr. Wymer spoke to MPs and political party staffers about the role of constituency offices in elections, to youth leaders about their role in politics, and to members of the media about election press coverage. In addition, he met with journalism students at Makerere University and spoke to government communications officials about media relations, particularly during a campaign. Mr. Wymer shared his experience in politics, communications and student leadership with audiences, engaging them in dialogue and encouraging continued discussion and debate.

¶9. PAS held several events in conjunction with other organizations. The week before the election, PAS and the Political/Economic Section partnered with a new think-tank, Fanaka Kwa Wote, to sponsor a public debate on "Challenges to Electoral Systems in Africa." Following opening remarks by Ambassador Stephen Browning, Secretary General of the ruling party (NRM) and Minister of Security Amama Mbabazi debated opposition leader Maurice Ogenga Latigo on issues related to electoral reform in Uganda. The debate was moderated by Andrew Mwenda, Managing Editor of The Independent newspaper and an International Visitor (IV) alumnus. In early September, PAS collaborated with the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI) to host a panel on nominating conventions for MPs, politicians and civil society activists. The NDI and IRI Country Directors, and PAO Lisa Heilbronn, moderated a discussion about campaigns and the electoral process. In late September, DPAO and a USAID colleague participated as panelists in a conference sponsored by the Makerere University Muslim Students Association (MUMSA). The panel topic, "The Impact of the U.S. Elections on Muslims," generated heated discussion and prompted numerous provocative questions from the audience of about 60 Muslim students.

¶10. To supplement pre-election programming, PAS organized speaking engagements at high schools and universities for Mission community members to engage students on election-related issues. In total, twelve speakers, including the DCM and several USAID employees, addressed a variety of student audiences, all of whom expressed strong appreciation for the chance to discuss the election with a Mission representative. Programs took place in Kampala and other areas, including Gulu and the American Corners in Fort Portal and Mbale. The format for each session varied, ranging from video screenings of IIP's Election and Sports DVD to interactive exercises to presentations using IIP's 2008 U.S. Election PowerPoint. All programs included a question and answer period in which the generally well-informed students could raise issues. Many schools requested that speakers return for future programs.

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POST-ELECTION PROGRAMS PLANNED  
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¶11. Post plans to take advantage of the excitement surrounding Obama's election to continue programs for Ugandan audiences that highlight democracy and the American electoral system up to and past the inauguration in January, 2009.

¶12. On November 18, PAS will host a media panel at a local hotel to discuss post-election issues. The panel will feature the various Ugandan journalists who have participated in Debate and Election Embed programs organized by the Foreign Press Center, the Murrow

International Visitor Leadership Program and American Studies  
Institutes.

¶13. PAS also plans to request a Direct Video Conference (DVC) with Sada Cumber, Special Envoy to the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). Post has also applied to IIP for a U.S. Speaker on the transition of power. In addition, PAS will continue its Mission Speakers Program, organizing outreach opportunities for Mission employees to discuss democracy, civic responsibility, and the transition of power with audiences around Uganda. Some of these programs will use the collection of civic education and political process books organized by Scholastic Books in association with IIP.

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